

**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**

Week 3 Assignment: Background – Developing Your Action Research Plan

Overview

The first two weeks provided a variety of readings, lectures, interviews and activities that helped students recognize the importance of action research in addressing many needed topics or areas of need in schools. You even had an opportunity to hear from three school leaders discussing their interests in action research. As we have explained in our lectures and our written comments, we did not design this course as a precursor to a dissertation. Instead, we wanted to provide each of you with the tools to conduct action research in whatever leadership position you may pursue.

This week will focus on developing a detailed action research plan. You will see from our examples, as well as from the readings and resources, there are a variety of strategies and steps to follow in conducting action research. Two of the major goals this week will be providing a framework, or a how to approach action research perspective, as well as sharing strategies that will empower you to conduct an action research project. Remember the action research plan is a part of your intern plan – it is an overview, a guide for conducting your action research. The action research project is the process and product – it is the implementation and assessment of your plan and it may take several months to complete. This course focuses on the development of an effective plan that will guide your action research project.

Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Know which areas for action research to address school improvement are priorities of the site supervisor.
- 2) Develop a clear and concise research question and/or statement to address the school improvement project(s).
- 3) Identify and analyze the common steps or format to design an action research plan (e.g., methods for data collection/analysis, research tools needed, etc.).
- 4) Understand the importance of disseminating the results of the action research project in the final intern report and to other scholar practitioners and interested stakeholders.

Performance Outcomes:

- 1) Write a research question and/or clear statement to address the possible areas for action research emerging from the interview and brainstorming.
- 2) Draft an action research plan that includes:
 - Goals and objectives of the research investigation
 - Resources and research tools needed for data gathering
 - Persons responsible for implementation of the action research plan
 - Process for monitoring the achievement of goals and objectives
 - Assessment instrument(s) to evaluate the effectiveness of the action research study
- 3) Review the steps in your research plan and make any needed revisions.

- 4) Include in the action research plan, the methods used to disseminate findings of the research project.

Rubric

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 3 Assignment.

Tasks	Accomplished The evidence suggests that this work is a "Habit of Mind." The educator is ready to mentor others in this area.	Proficient The evidence suggests that performance on this work matches that of a strong educator.	Needs Improvement The evidence does not yet make the case for the educator being proficient at this task.
Action Research – Developing your question(s) or problem(s) statement	Student provides a clear description of the action research question(s) or problem(s) statement that reference rationale and previous research into this question(s) or problem(s). (3 Points)	Student briefly describes a research question or problem statement, but does not discuss the rationale or research leading to the development of the question or statement. (2 Points)	Student fails to identify a research question or statement and does not discuss any of the rationale or previous research in trying to develop a research question or problem statement. (1 Point)
Draft Action Research Plan and Blueprint	Student clearly identifies all areas of his or her action research plan and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals and objectives/outcomes of the research investigation • Activities designed to achieve the objectives • Resources and research tools needed for data gathering • Draft timeline for completion or implementation of activities • Persons responsible for implementation of the action research plan • Process for monitoring the achievement of goals and objectives 	Student identifies less than the seven areas addressed in the draft action research plan and does not provide complete descriptions for each area. (5 – 7 Points)	Student identifies fewer than five areas of the draft action research plan and does not provide complete descriptions for each of the areas. (1 – 4 Points)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment instrument(s) to evaluate the effectiveness of the action research study (8 – 10 Points)		
Reviewing, revising and posting the draft action research plan using the recommended template(s)	<p>Student reviews the draft action research plan and posts a completed draft Action Research Plan that addresses all elements identified in Tool 7.1 Action Planning Template or completes all elements of the SIP/PIP (School or Professional Improvement Plan of Action).</p> (3 Points)	<p>Student posts the draft action research plan using one of the templates (i.e., Tool 7.1 or the SIP or PIP Plan of Action), but does not complete all elements of the template.</p> (2 Points)	<p>Student posts a draft action research plan but the plan addresses less than half of the elements of the recommended template.</p> (1 Point)
Describing your dissemination plan	<p>Students provide a thorough description of a plan to disseminate and share their action research plan, and their dissemination plan addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background information on action research project Design of the action research project (must include procedures, data collection and data analysis) Describes what is being learned from the action research project Includes concluding thoughts and recommendations (4 Points)	<p>Students provide a dissemination plan but addresses only three elements of the plan.</p> (3 Points)	<p>Students provide a partial dissemination plan.</p> (1 Point)
Assignment Mechanics	<p>Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Students demonstrate proper APA</p>	<p>Responses are relevant to course content; few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.</p>	<p>Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar,</p>

	style. (3 Points)	(2 Points)	spelling, and punctuation. (1 Point)
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Week Three Assignment, Part 1 – Writing an Action Research Question(s) or Problem Statement

You have had many opportunities (e.g., review and conference regarding your intern plan; the interviews with the school leaders; the Dana text identification of nine common topics for school action research, Step 1 in the Harris et al. text) to review and analyze topics or questions for action research. The Dana text provides a sampling of research questions corresponding to the nine common topics for action research; see Sample Inquiry Questions, pp. 65 – 66. We have also provided another sample of action research questions from an action research project; see the Resource Section for the Equity Audit of Mathematics by Jo Ann Colson and Valerie Petrzelka, two elementary principals in Tomball ISD, who are doctoral students in the Lamar Educational Leadership program. Please read their research questions that guided their equity audit.

Using the various examples of action research questions or statements, write a research question and/or clear statement to address the possible areas for action research emerging from the interview(s), readings and brainstorming. This action research question(s) or statement describing the action research project should clearly identify the agreed upon topic that you will research throughout this program, or until, the project is completed. The question or statement should briefly describe the rationale or previous research you have conducted leading to this question or problem statement.

Workspace

Complete Part 1 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

As a component of my Week Two Assignment in my Lamar EDLD 5301 Research course, I identified three topics for possible action research. My first possible topic addressed the area or passion of Staff Development and was based on my wondering whether providing technology staff development primarily through a peer mentoring/peer coaching model would help our veteran teachers integrate technology more naturally and transparently as do many of our younger teachers.

My second possible action research topic addressed the area of Curriculum Development, and my question of how I, as Technology Director, can assist our principals as curriculum leaders to improve the quality and relevance their campus' curriculum content.

My third possible action research topic, and the topic area I chose after my initial consultations with my Site Supervisor, addresses the area of Individual Student(s), and deals with applying action research to find ways that I, as Technology Director, can make instructional technology more accessible to our special needs students, particularly those in our Special Education classrooms. The goal of my research is to facilitate the implementation of technology for LVISD special needs students in order to increase technology accessibility, usability, time on task, differentiation, and early intervention to increase student achievement and improve the classroom behavioral climate.

As conversations with my Site Supervisor continued during week three of this course, we determined that the broad scope of my goal included several objectives; performing action research specifically on a critical objective, the instructional software component of the overall project, will potentially yield the most immediate potential benefit. This narrower, well-delineated objective of improving the efficacy, rigor and relevance of the instructional software in the Special Education classroom will facilitate research, and the results can be easily evaluated. Instructional software in the Special Education classroom is critical to both effective use of the technology tools and to student learning; a concern we have based on initial investigation is that technology is used with special needs students to placate and entertain them far more frequently than to educate them, and that the software used in the Special Education classrooms is outmoded and ineffective. This situation is not limited to LVISD; as Rina Almaraz (2010), EDLD 5301 classmate, astutely observed in her response to my Discussion Board posting, *"Sometimes the computer is used as a motivator (reward) for some of our Special Education students, and their use of computers is limited... Technology... has not become a tool for learning, other than watching Brainpop Jr. and some other video sites. It is important to make sure that all students have access to Web 2.0 tools as well as the support it takes to help them to progress in their technology use..."*

The context, or setting, of my action research study will be the LVISD Special Education classrooms on all four of our campuses. The target population will ultimately consist of all LVISD special needs students, but my sample for study of this particular objective will consist only of special needs students receiving their primary instruction in our Special Education classrooms; approximately 200 students in all grade levels fall into this category. I chose this sample size to reduce the influence of any particular Special Education classroom or campus environment, or any particular teacher or group, on the survey results.

I will form a Software Evaluation Committee to aid with my research and evaluation tasks. Using online survey tools, we will compile a list of the existing instructional software, including the

instructional need the software targets. Action research will then be used to determine best practices for applying instructional technology/software to address each identified need. The software in use will then be evaluated to determine how well it accomplishes the instructional goals in light of the best practices determined through our research. Software deemed sufficiently rigorous and relevant based on the research criteria will be retained, while software not meeting our standard will be targeted for replacement. Further research will be performed to determine the best option to replace any and all ineffective software, with the goal of obtaining software that is web-based and utilizes Web 2.0 tools to the extent possible so as to increase technology implementation levels while facilitating anywhere/anytime learning, especially for students occasionally homebound due to illness or disability. Evaluation criteria for determining the efficacy of the new software will include teacher surveys, classroom observations, student performance on benchmark and other test instruments including high-stakes testing, and logs of the number of students accessing the new software.

References:

Almarez, Rina (2010, August 1). *Lamar Epic Learning Management System, Week 3 Discussion Board*. Retrieved from <https://lamar.epiclms.net/learn/player.aspx>

Week Three Assignment, Part 2 – Developing an Action Research Plan

Draft an action research plan that includes:

- Goals and objectives/outcomes of the research investigation
- Activities designed to achieve the objectives
- Resources and research tools needed for data gathering
- Draft timeline for completion or implementation of activities
- Persons responsible for implementation of the action research plan
- Process for monitoring the achievement of goals and objectives
- Assessment instrument(s) to evaluate the effectiveness of the action research study

Please check the Resource section of the course for a template, SIP or PIP (School or Professional Improvement Project) Plan of Action that you may wish to use in developing and submitting your Action Research Plan of Action Brief or Outline. You may also use the template found in the Harris et al. text, Tool 7.1 Action Planning Template, p. 85, this is also available as a free download, see p. vii.

Workspace

Complete Part 2 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

Action Planning Template

Goal: Facilitate the implementation of technology for LVISD special needs students to increase technology accessibility, usability, time on task, differentiation, and early intervention, thereby increasing student achievement and improving the classroom behavioral climate.

Objective: Improve the quality, rigor, relevance and efficacy of the instructional software utilized in LVISD Special Education classrooms.

Action Steps(s):	Person(s) Responsible:	Timeline: Start/End	Needed Resources	Evaluation
Form Software Evaluation Committee comprised of Teachers, Principals, Curriculum Director and Technology Director; elect Chairperson; form Research Workgroup and Evaluation Workgroup.	Technology Director	August 2, 2010 - August 16, 2010	Committee members; time.	Committee has been formed, roster of committee members available.
Conduct survey of software utilized in Special Education classrooms, including the instructional need the software targets.	Technology Director	August 9, 2010 - August 23, 2010	Online survey tools including Survey Monkey and LimeSurvey; Internet access; computer workstations and printers; time.	Survey created and published online, accessible to all Special Education classroom teachers.
Schedule and hold weekly	Software Evaluation	August 18, 2010 – July 29,	Committee members;	Weekly meeting

Software Evaluation Committee meetings and workgroup meetings, either in person or via online collaborative tools or video conferencing.	Committee Chairperson	2011	shared Google Docs documents; conferencing sites; conferencing equipment; time.	minutes; collaborative documents; online meeting logs.
Conduct research on best practices for using instructional software with special needs students and best practices for addressing each identified need.	Software Evaluation Committee Research Workgroup	August 18, 2010 – October 6, 2010	Internet access; online research tools including databases and search engines; computer workstations and printers; time.	Documented best practices compiled for addressing each identified need.
Evaluate each existing software title for conformance to best practices for addressing each identified need; identify ineffective software to be replaced.	Software Evaluation Committee Research Workgroup	October 6, 2010 - November 17, 2010	Compiled best practices documentation; Internet access; online research tools including databases and search engines; computer workstations and printers; time.	List(s) created of software meeting standard and of ineffective software to be replaced.
Perform research to determine best options for replacement of ineffective software; preference will be given to web-based software and	Software Evaluation Committee Research Workgroup	November 17, 2010 – January 5, 2011	Compiled best practices documentation; list of ineffective software to be replaced; Internet access; online research tools including databases,	List(s) created of replacement software options.

software utilizing Web 2.0 Tools.			search engines; computer workstations and printers; time.	
Determine software to be purchased; software must meet identified need, follow best practices, meet budgetary requirements and curriculum guidelines	Software Evaluation Committee Research Workgroup; Curriculum Director; Technology Director	January 5, 2011 – February 9, 2011	Compiled best practices documentation; Internet access; online research tools including databases, search engines; computer workstations and printers; time.	List(s) created of recommended software.
Procure and install software.	Technology Director	February 9, 2011 – March 30, 2011	Technology Allotment funds; access to servers and computer workstations; Technology Department staff; time	Software purchased; software loaded, configured and tested; software available to students and teachers.
Evaluate efficacy of new software.	Software Evaluation Committee Evaluation Workgroup	March 30, 2011 – June 1, 2011	Online survey tools including Survey Monkey and LimeSurvey; classroom observation results; benchmark testing results; high-stakes testing results; Internet access; computer workstations and printers; copy machines; time.	Evaluation data obtained, compiled and analyzed; report of findings produced.
Dissemination of findings.	Software Evaluation	June 1, 2011 – July 29, 2011	Website and social media	Report of findings

	Committee Evaluation Workgroup		authoring tools; Internet access; computer workstations and printers; copy machines; time.	disseminated in both hardcopy and via online media resources; report of findings presented to School Board.
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Format based on Tool 7.1 from *Examining What We Do to Improve Our Schools* (Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2010)

Process for Monitoring the Achievement of Goals and Objectives:

The Software Evaluation Committee Evaluation Workgroup, operating under the oversight of the Software Evaluation Committee Chairperson, is responsible for monitoring the progress of this Action Plan and for documenting the achievement of tasks, objectives and goals. If the Evaluation Workgroup determines that a task is not being accomplished in a timely and/or effective manner in accordance with the plan, the Evaluation Workgroup, through the Chairperson, will contact the appropriate person(s) or group(s) responsible for the task and attempt to facilitate any required adjustments to timelines, resources and/or criteria. Any resulting Action Plan changes facilitated by the Evaluation Workgroup must be brought before the Software Evaluation Committee for approval; upon approval, District departments or staff may be contacted for special assistance or input as required.

Gathering and evaluating evidence, producing documentation of attainment of project objectives and goals, and disseminating all findings is a primary task of the Evaluation Workgroup.

Week Three Assignment, Part 3 – Steps to Follow in Your Action Research Plan

As discussed previously, there are many how to conduct action research steps or strategies to follow in developing your Action Research Plan. Some of the readings have already described the action research process, and some have even provided illustrations demonstrating the action research cycle.

One of the better and concise texts describing steps in action research* is your supplemental text, *Examining what we do to improve our schools: 8 steps from analysis to action* by Sandra Harris, Stacey Edmonson, and Julie Combs, (Eye on Education, 2010). We added this to the course because we think it provides an excellent how to implement action research blueprint that you may use for any school or professional improvement project. Here are the steps they outline:

1. Examining the work: Setting the Foundation – in other words, identifying needs or topics for action research and this may emerge from the Site Based Decision Making Committee, or from needs like those identified in your intern plan.
2. Analyzing data – you have had many opportunities to do this, and you examined at least 9 data gathering strategies from your text in Part 2 of this week's assignments
3. Developing deeper understanding – these are additional data collection techniques, as well as, examining qualitative data through active listening, focus groups, etc.
4. Engaging in Self-Reflection – this summarizes much of what you have been doing in this course, and throughout the program, beginning with your many self-assessments of leadership in EDLD 5311
5. Exploring Programmatic Patterns – This includes asking the appropriate questions, identifying data patterns and gaps, and learning to address equity issues
6. Determining direction – Working collaboratively to address action research questions, monitoring progress, and assessing achievement
7. Taking action for school improvement – Using appropriate steps or templates like the SIP or PIP Plan of action to guide the action research
8. Sustaining improvement – Learning to use the tools of action research as an on-going process for professional development and school improvement.

*Please see the Action Research Project Process Overview Example: Student Use of Cell Phones in the Resource Section for a more detailed outline.

Using this outline, or the PIP/SIP template, review the steps, make any needed revisions and submit your draft Action Research Plan. Be sure to also upload your Plan on your Action Research Blog for others to view and share insights.

Workspace

Complete Part 3 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

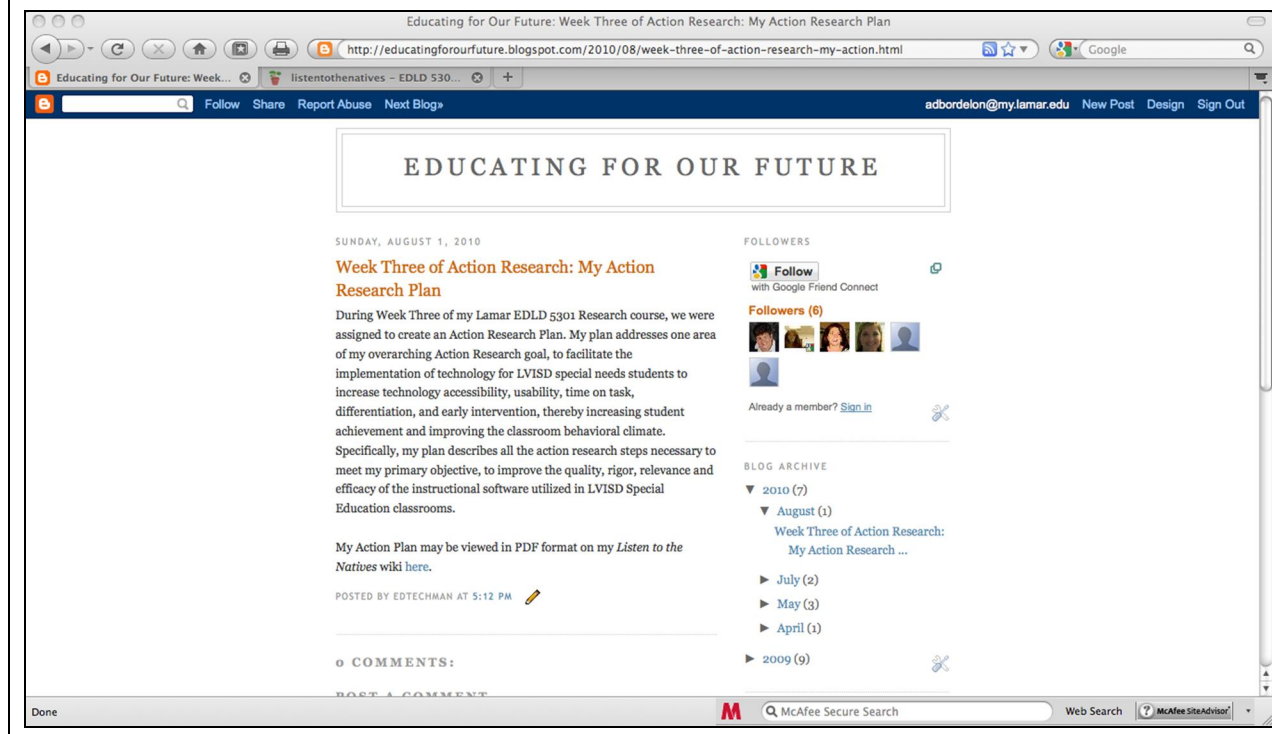
1. Examining the work: Setting the Foundation – When examining the potential topics for developing this action research project, multiple discussions with my Site Supervisor, Dr. Tom Harvey, Superintendent of Schools, identified potential topics for research that aligned with my internship project, addressed identified needs for the District, and were harmonious with the District Vision.
2. Analyzing data – Data was gathered for this project from various sources including analysis of Special Education students' performance on TAKS and benchmark testing, analyzing patterns of technology usage on Texas Teacher STaR Charts and other technology assessments, qualitative data from classroom appraisal visits and through discussions during District Leadership Team meetings examining needs across campuses.
3. Developing deeper understanding – Deeper understanding was obtained primarily through qualitative data obtained during discussions with campus and District leaders and through anecdotal data provided by various Special Education teachers. Listening to the concerns and expressed need of involved staff provided contextual information that, when combined with quantitative data, provided a deeper understanding of the problems faced by our Special Education teachers and special needs students.
4. Engaging in Self-Reflection – Self reflection has been critical during the initial development of this action research project to determine areas of passion to address, to evaluate my own experiences regarding potential areas in need of improvement, and to determine both what I know that is useful to the project as well as what I do not know that I must learn through research.
5. Exploring Programmatic Patterns – Equity issues played a large part in the decision making process when examining potential projects; the project ultimately chosen helps address the equity concern that special needs students are frequently sent to the computer to “keep them busy” rather than to use the computer as a primary instruction device. This pattern represents a disparity from the behavior of teachers regarding regular education students, and must be addressed.
6. Determining direction – Instructional software has been a growing concern for the La Vernia ISD Leadership team; too much of our software is outdated or outmoded yet remains in use because teachers are comfortable with their tried-and-true programs. A new direction must be set, using a research-based, programmatic model to determine the instructional need the software is to address, research best practices for addressing this identified need, then applying these best practices in an evaluation of instructional software in an effort to “pass or fail” each software component. Once the Action Plan associated with this project has been tested and proven, it will be applied as a model for evaluating and upgrading all instructional software District-wide.
7. Taking action for school improvement – The Action Planning template used in this action research project may form a model for future campus improvement initiatives as it provides a good basis for planning and carrying out change initiatives, detailing all pertinent steps including delineation of responsibility and data dissemination

plans.

8. Sustaining improvement – Although this Action Plan will be used initially during a process of evaluating and upgrading the instructional software in our Special Education classrooms, the plan will be extended to other areas, and then will be regularly repeated to insure software remains relevant and takes advantage of the latest best practices regarding the implementation of instructional technology.

My Blog Reflection has been posted as specified, utilizing the 7.1 Action Plan research template, on my blog site at <http://educatingforourfuture.blogspot.com/>

Please note my Action Plan is included in the blog through a linked PDF file, as shown below:



Week Three Assignment, Part 4 – Sharing Your Action Research Plan, Progress, Findings, and Recommendations

Read chapter 5 from the Dana text, *The Travelogue: Sharing your work with others*, pp. 135 – 169, and write a description of how you will share the progress and process of your action research project, as well as discussing ways to disseminate your action research project findings and recommendations. Be sure to include information on the four critical tasks you must include in effectively sharing your action research project, see the Dana text, pp. 163 – 169.

Workspace

Complete Part 4 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

- Background information on action research project:

This Action Plan details one sub-component of a larger project designed to increase technology accessibility, usability, time on task, differentiation, and early intervention, thereby increasing student achievement and improving the classroom behavioral climate in La Vernia ISD Special Education classrooms. This specific project sub-component is designed to determine best practices for evaluating, procuring and utilizing instructional software to address the learning needs of special needs students. This context, along with clear identification of the target group, is essential information to be disseminated as a component of the project background. Accurate and complete information on the project background, including initial data collected, analysis, research and decisions made at project onset, will be disclosed in the initial dissemination of project information via web-based sources including blogs and wikis, as well as during oral presentations (including multimedia presentations) at inservice meetings, Leadership Team meetings, campus staff meetings and School Board meetings. All online project resources including research links and collaborative documents will be shared via a blog developed especially for this project.

- Design of the action research project (must include procedures, data collection and data analysis)

When sharing the design of this action research project, all data used as a part of the initial decision making, and the methods used to collect the data, will be disclosed as a part of the initial background information disclosure. Project procedures implemented in and detailed through the Action Plan will be delineated, along with a thorough explanation of all ongoing data collection and analysis activities; it is critical to disclose what data is being collected by whom, and to disclose their role in project management, so as to avoid any potential implication of those close to the data manipulating it to make the project appear successful. Whenever possible, quantifiable data sources must use openly verifiable sources (so long as privacy is not breeched) so that project data may be easily verified, and results duplicated, by any interested party. Disclosure of all planning procedures, data sources, data collection methods and data analysis practices is an essential component of project data dissemination if the data is to be taken seriously.

- Describes what is being learned from the action research project

Ongoing dissemination of lessons learned and the findings of intermediate data analysis during this project will be made via oral presentations (including multimedia presentations) at inservice meetings, Leadership Team meetings, campus staff meetings and School Board meetings by the Technology Director, Curriculum Director and members of the project's Software Evaluation Committee. These briefings will be designed both to keep people informed of the progress being made on the project as well as to share intermediate lessons learned through all research and project activities

as detailed in the Action Plan.

- Includes concluding thoughts and recommendations

Once the steps outlined in the Action Plan have been carried out, the Instructional Software objective will have been fulfilled, and the LVISD special needs students in our Special Education classrooms will be utilizing new software as part of a complete technology overhaul with the goal of increasing technology accessibility, usability, time on task, differentiation, and early intervention, thereby increasing student achievement and improving the classroom behavioral climate. However, as this is only the primary objective towards attaining the overall goal, action towards other objectives, including researching and evaluating thin-client and virtual desktop technologies for implementation in these classrooms, and instituting professional development through the use of peer mentoring for these teachers, will be occurring simultaneously. The results of each objective towards attainment of the overall goal will be disseminated upon completion using all methods as detailed above. The ultimate success or failure of the entire project will depend upon obtaining and analyzing data from all of the objectives, and on evaluation of student performance data once the entire project is complete. To best support the accurate dissemination of all data related to this project, the development of similar Action Plans will be required for each objective so as to maintain research-based, documented, quantifiable data trails, facilitating replication of this project by other schools and districts. All data, including lessons learned, intermediate and final conclusions, and recommendations applicable to similar initiatives will be disseminated in the final report produced and released after the conclusion of all project activities.

Blog reflections

As noted above, please post your Action Research Plan on your blog, and make every effort to read and review action research plans from at least two other blogs this week or by early next week.